

# Berlingske Weekendavisen

January 12-18, 2001

by Mette Sandbye

*Anastasi Bradshaw Cage*

at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark

## The Music of Chance

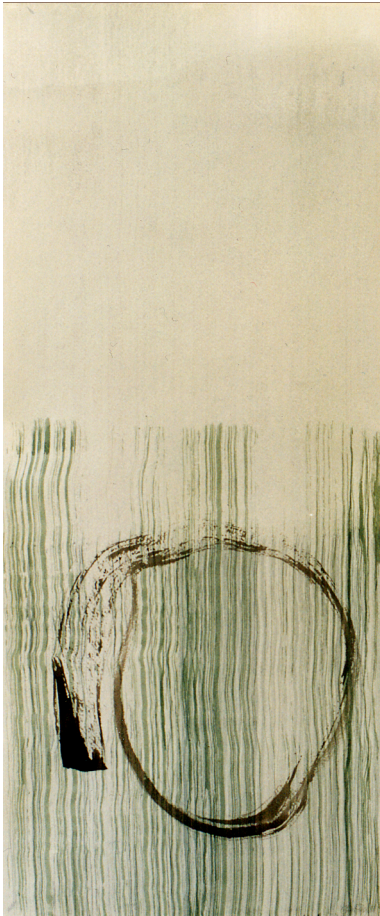
Both Anastasi and Bradshaw are obviously inspired by the oriental philosophy of Zen, as was their friend John Cage (1912- 92). They were close friends with Cage and the Roskilde exhibition makes the dialogue and mutual inspiration among the three explicit. In the catalogue the composer Karl Aage Rasmussen calls Cage the greatest artist of the 20th Century because his thinking crossed all medias. If one has to label him, however, it would probably be as a composer. Cage renewed modern music from the 40's and 50's and onward to an extreme degree by perceiving everyday sounds as music: for instance his well known 'composition' 4'33 in which no additional sounds are made for 4 minutes and 33 seconds -- only the existing sounds of the environment. The importance of Cage is also due to the formulation of his ideas about art. A famous quote is as follows: "I am not interested in the results of my work, I am interested in being alive." Besides his interest in oriental philosophy, chess, music and a vegetarian life style, which all three shared, Cage and Anastasi shared a fascination for James Joyce, particularly with *Finnegans Wake*. In a room dedicated to sound work at the Museum of Contemporary Art one can listen to a number of (rare) compositions by Cage on loan from the pioneer center of sound art Studio Akustische Kunst in Cologne. One is *Roaratorio* which is a fascinating and suggestive collage interpretation of *Finnegans Wake* with the inclusion of human voices, noise, traditional Irish harmonies, jigs, sounds of nature and much more - an attempt at transposing Joyce's advanced and challenging avant-garde book into music. Like Anastasi, Cage lets chance rule to a high degree by using predetermined, logical chance operations that generate their own poetry. Cage also creates visual works. Again he lets chance rule by working with fire on paper or making (very beautiful) edible paper out of edible organic products. A number of Anastasi's works from Nikolaj are also on view at Roskilde in a slightly altered form.



Dove Bradshaw, *Contingency [Book]*, 1996, silver, liver of sulfur on linen paper, 66 x 107 cm

*Work as a process of change* could be the title for the contribution by the younger Dove Bradshaw (born 1949). Anastasi and Bradshaw have prepared for the exhibition for a few months at the state's workshop at Gammel Dok. Bradshaw collected a series of faxe calkstones which she left for weeks on a much larger piece of kildecalk in the museum's garden. The disintegration process of the top stone created by rain and weather appear as beautiful patterns of a kind of limestone bleed onto the "understone". Now they are

placed in the museum. She made a book of silver with a number of openings which, under the influence of sulfur oxides, creates immensely beautiful, still changing patterns on its pages.



**John Cage, *New River Watercolors, Series 3*, 1988, Watercolor on paper, 92 x 38 cm**



**William Anastasi, *Without Title [Sound Object]*, 1964, inner tube, speaker,**

The Museum of Contemporary Art decided to represent inter-media and sound art for the most part focusing on communicating ideas to the visitors. It's worth emphasizing that the labels explaining the works place them in a wider context. This is especially important in an exhibition of challenging art of this nature, which is both tremendously simple and highly complicated. In many ways the work is a kind of research in and for the artistic environment. There is a kind of research investigating aspects of work – what happens when it is exhibited and so on. It is a kind of art that sometimes - against its purpose- can make the audience feel dumber than it is, as though to say, “Look, we will help you to open your eyes to the poetry of everyday life and chance in a way that will enrich your trivial and blinkered views”. But perhaps, with the exception of Anastasi's cloth used in boiling brown rice, Cage, Anastasi and Bradshaw do not belong to this category because they always approach the world with simple but thought provoking, structuring actions which open us up to the already visible and change it - an art which may cause its audience to take time to reflect upon the existential questions.